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ABSTRACT

AURAL-ORAL TEACHING PROCEDURES IN ELEMENTARY CLASSICAL GREEK AND IN KOINE ARE ACCOMPANIED BY RECOMMENDED TEXTS. A SURVEY OF COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES IN AMERICA TEACHING FIRST-YEAR GREEK POINTS OUT THE GROWING INTEREST IN THIS SUBJECT, AND THUS THE NEED FOR NEW MATERIALS. OPERATING ON THE BASIC LINGUISTIC PRINCIPLE THAT ALL LANGUAGES ARE ESSENTIALLY ORAL, THE AUTHOR DESCRIBES A THREE-STEP PROCESS WHICH AIMS, NONETHELESS, TO DEVELOP MORE EFFICIENT READERS AND TO ENCOURAGE FURTHER STUDY. (RL)

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AURAL/ORAL METHODS IN FIRST-YEAR GREEK

I BEGIN WITH a statistical summary of replies to a questionnaire on the above subject:

Number of questionnaires mailed: 428
Replies received: 265
Institutions offering first-year Greek: 214[1]
Classical: 147
Koine: 67
Institutions not offering first-year Greek: 51[2]
Total enrollment in first-year Greek in the 214 institutions: 4508
Classical: 3043, average class size 21
Koine: 1465, average class size 22[3]

On the basis of these replies it would seem that there is a fairly healthy interest in the study of ancient Greek in the colleges and universities of America, and that Greek is hardly a dead language in this respect.

Textbooks or other materials used were: for classical Greek, Chase-Phillips 49, Crosby-Schaeffer 41, Paine 15, Allen 12, White 5, Pharr 4, Nairn-Nairn 4, Schoder-Horrigan 3, Burgess-Bonner 1, Duffy 1, Fobes 1, Wildung 1, Goodwin 1, mimeographed 2, mixed 5, unspecified 2. For koine: Machen 34, Summers 7, Davis 6, Goetchius 4, Hale 3, Wenham 1, Rife 1, Walther 1, LaSor 1, mimeographed 2, mixed 3, unspecified 4. ("Mixed" means that textbooks vary from year to year or with different instructors.) Note that five institutions use their own mimeographed or multilithed materials, indicating an interest in some sort of revision of traditional materials. One of these (LaSor) is available in bound form and is fully integrated with the aural/oral method. One respondent is seeking a publisher for his new text (also an aural/oral text). Another is currently writing a new text.

I was mildly surprised that there were not more supplementary materials in use. One institution reported the use of "supplementary materials"; I gather that this is some sort of mimeographed material. Another uses mimeographed exercise sheets; samples were enclosed. A third uses mimeographed exercise sheets for *oral* drills. Four institutions report the use of an overhead projector, and remark that it is effective. At three institutions the aural/oral method is the *basic* approach (two classical, one koine). Here the language laboratory is, of course, a regular part of instruction. Two institutions report (without details) that they have "considerably modified" their approach by the use of aural/oral methods. Thirty institutions are using tapes of one sort or another to reenforce the learning process; three of these indicate specifically that they use tapes to teach pronunciation. No doubt more use tapes for this purpose, but they do not state this specifically. Three use tapes for conjugation and declension drill; again the number of such users is no doubt higher. Three use tapes featuring portions of the New Testament read in *modern* Greek. Two use recorded selections from the *Iliad* or the tragic or lyric poets. Twenty-one report that tapes are used for vocabulary drills, oral reading drills, or in some other (unspecified) way in connection with a workbook or other supplementary material. Some of these use tapes to only a small degree, others quite extensively. Five more report that they will use tapes for the first time during the next school year. Thirty-one use the language laboratory to some extent, most of them on a voluntary basis; three use it as a regular part of their teaching program. (Some of the above classifications overlap; actually, 38 schools, about equally distributed between classical and koine, report that they are using some sort of aural/oral method. Quite a number have been using the aural/oral method for Latin, and successfully.) Finally, a large number express interest in the use of the aural/oral method for first-year Greek.

It is clear that the aural/oral method of language instruction will have to be used for ancient Greek, which is now a dead language, in a way different from that for the modern European

[1] Since at least 40 institutions known to offer first-year Greek did not return the questionnaire, my results are only partial and approximate.

[2] Ten of these indicated that they expect or hope to add it in the near future.

[3] In classical Greek the largest enrollment reported was 125 students. Other institutions reported 105, 100, 80, 78, 71, 64, 60, 55, 50, and several in the 40's. In koine the largest reported enrollment was 100. Another reported 80, two listed 70, and another 65.

FL 001 598

languages, for which the method was developed. It is my contention, however, that despite the differences involved, the aural/oral method can be used in a way which is both helpful to the teacher and profitable for the student. I feel, in other words, that the method can be used as a real aid in the learning process, and that, if used properly, it can be more effective and efficient than the older traditional method, which has been used with little or no modification for the past two or three hundred years.

It must be readily admitted that the teacher of the classical languages has a different aim or purpose in mind than does the instructor in the modern languages, which are still being spoken. Whereas the aim of most modern language programs is to develop a speaking skill in the language in question, it is clear that such skill will be of little or no value for the student of ancient Greek, where the only aim is a satisfactory reading knowledge of ancient texts.

Once this difference is admitted, however, there is every reason to believe that the aural/oral method, properly modified, can hasten, augment and reenforce the learning process for the average student of ancient Greek, and can make the learning process more effective and more enjoyable. The justification for this statement lies in the fact that the aural/oral method makes use of three senses (sight, hearing, speech) instead of one, and that three channels of communication to the brain must be more effective than one.

One important factor to be kept in mind is that the student of ancient Greek, no less than the student of modern German or French, is still learning a language, albeit one which is nowhere actually spoken any longer. It should not be forgotten that a language is essentially something spoken, not written, and that fundamentally the mechanics of learning a language must ever remain the same. In learning any language one must learn words, phrases, clauses and sentences, all of which are used to express thoughts. If the ear and the mouth, therefore, can be put to use in addition to the eye, they should hasten and reenforce the learning process. That this is so has been amply demonstrated with modern European languages, as well as in our elementary schools in teaching English where the aural/oral method has always been used. Since we are dealing with college students who are learning the Greek *language,* it seems reasonable that the advantages of the aural/oral method should be used here also.

Such work as I have done in the experimental use of the aural/oral method has been done with this aim in mind, to hasten and reenforce the learning process, to make the student a more proficient *reader* of ancient Greek texts, and not, certainly, to develop any particular speaking efficiency in Greek, which would have no practical value whatever.

First of all, it would seem that the aural/oral method could be used with particular effectiveness during the early stages of the study of ancient Greek. One point of minor difficulty is the fact that the student is confronted at once by a new alphabet and some new sounds, and then by a whole host of new words. It is really quite inconceivable to me that any student could really learn all this without making some effort to pronounce the various syllables and words. Here tapes, used as a model, would certainly hasten and facilitate the learning process and eliminate a great many early mistakes. Such tapes would be most effective as a supplement to regular classroom instruction and for repeated oral drills in the language laboratory. In the same way tapes should be of distinct help in learning new vocabulary and in continuing vocabulary drills.

Second, it is well-known that the major portion of the student's time in first-year Greek is spent in learning the many new inflectional forms. Here again it is inconceivable to me how any student can ever really master this mass of new forms without frequent and constant repetition; surely oral repetition is much more effective than mere reading. Here too, then, the use of well-prepared tapes which give due attention to, among other things, the difficult matter of Greek accent, surely can be of significant help by giving the student a correct model. In such use of the aural/oral method the student of first-year Greek would be encouraged to use such tapes until all the basic material has been thoroughly mastered; this could best be done by the "library" use of the language laboratory for continued oral drills.

Third, when all fundamental material has been mastered, the aural/oral method can be used in a more limited but still effective way, in training the student to read aloud all selections presented for translation. Many a teacher will agree, I am sure, that there is something distinctly beneficial in such oral reading before the student turns to translation.

I should explain that our small college does not as yet have its own language laboratory, although we have done considerable work along these lines. Our efforts have necessarily been channeled in a different direction. We have been forced to use regular classroom hours for oral work, and have found that we can profitably use about half of our fifty-minute session each day for oral work.

On the first day this time is used for simple oral drill in which students repeat aloud the sounds or words spoken by the instructor. After a few days of this, the time is spent in oral dictation by the instructor (words, then phrases, then sentences), while students are required to

transcribe (at first) and then to translate the material given orally. I also take the opportunity to have students parse cartain selected words in each sentence in order to make the various inflectional forms more meaningful. These oral exercises were prepared for use with Allen's beginning textbook.

I have found that it is much more helpful to students, and also a much more effective method, to duplicate all exercises each day, along with the correct translation, and then to distribute these duplicated sheets as soon as the exercises are finished and the papers collected for grading. A few very important minutes are thus spent at the very end going over the sentences and the answers while the sounds are still fresh in the students' ears and memories. The collection and careful grading of the papers has also proved to be most important and helpful in that it gives an idea of the areas of difficulty for each student and the opportunity to write daily comments to each student.

Besides such oral drills in class, I regularly encourage and implore students to do *all* their preparations orally, both learning new forms and translating, repeating the material aloud many times either to themselves or to one another. It has been here especially that I have felt the lack of a laboratory; those who have such laboratories should be encouraged to use them.

To have a truly effective aural/oral program two things are necessary, a language laboratory (this need not be complicated nor expensive), and a complete set of tapes, consisting of at least one or two tapes for each lesson of the text. The practical problem at the moment is that at present there seem to be no tapes available for use with any of the standard texts. A fair number of individual schools or teachers have indicated that they prepare their own tapes for their own use, but I know of no plan to copy and distribute tapes to others who may wish to use them. This, then, would be the first all-important step in the expanded use of the aural/oral method. Those who have been making their own tapes should be encouraged to exchange tapes with others, so that all the useful ideas could be incorporated in some final effort.

Next, some one text should be selected for use with this method, or one of the present texts should be modified for such use. On the basis of the present survey this text should be either Chase and Phillips or Crosby and Schaeffer for classical Greek, for koine Machen or LaSor (which already use the aural/oral method). (This suggestion, made purely from the standpoint of statistics, is motivated by no other considerations; I, for instance, have been using Allen.) Finally, some one or two individuals should be selected (how?) to actually prepare tapes after consultation with the publisher, who would offer them for sale along with the (newly revised?) text.

I am not an expert in any of the matters discussed above, but simply a teacher interested in improving teaching methods. Perhaps the chief value of the present survey lies at present in the fact that from the replies received some kind of a directory of interested schools and individuals could be drawn up. Such a directory could serve as a kind of clearinghouse for the exchange of ideas.

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